

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****Using the Web as a Weapon: the Internet as a Tool for Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism**

November 6, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled "Using the Web as a Weapon: the Internet as a Tool for Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism":

"Today we turn to a very serious concern: the use of the Internet to promote extremist violence.

The Internet has drastically increased the ability of terrorists to reach a global audience – an audience they want to indoctrinate. And the terrorists are doing so with impunity. Unlike other pathways into the country, the Internet is not restricted by border enforcement or protected by TSA, and its users can remain anonymous.

It allows users to connect with like-minded individuals, resulting in a sense of closeness and community that transcends race, gender, age and physical location. Indeed, the Internet provides users with a sense of belonging – a perfect vehicle for al Qaeda and others to recruit people on the fringes.

And it's happening. Daniel Sonier, a 22-year old troubled Canadian, stated: 'The first time I saw an al-Qaeda video [on the Internet], I was ready to go. I wanted to kill the disbelievers.' According to one friend, Sonier became so extreme he once said he would go to war against his own father.

Friends started calling him 'Osama bin Daniel.' What's so troubling about Mr. Sonier is that, by all accounts, he was an average twenty-two year-old until he was indoctrinated by extremists that found him on the Internet.

Mr. Sonier lives in Canada. But Samir Khan, a 21-year old American, operates an extremist website out of the comfort of his parents' home in North Carolina. It is one of the most frequently visited English-language websites in the world that preaches a radicalized view of Islam and promotes violence. What makes this means of communication so appealing to terrorist organizations is that new converts don't need a plane ticket to arrange a meeting.

Instead, videos, blogs, chat rooms and message boards expose new recruits to a romanticized view of jihad with a few keyboard strokes. I want to congratulate the Chair and Ranking Member of this Subcommittee for authoring a bill that overwhelmingly passed the House last month.

It forces us to face this threat and come up with strategies to counter it that not only protect our people but also their Constitutional rights."

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